

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5996

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CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 11643

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MMOL, TH

SUBJECT: THAI MILITARY PROCUREMENT TO INCREASE

SUMMARY: BASED ON INFORMATION OBTAINED THROUGH VARIOUS CHANNELS, IT APPEARS THAT THE RTG IS PREPARING FOR A CONSIDERABLE INCREASE IN MILITARY PROCUREMENT. THIS REFLECTS HEIGHTENED THAI CONCERN OVER SECURITY SITUATION IN WAKE OF RECENT SEA EVENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. HIGH-RANKING THAI OFFICIALS, BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, HAVE BEEN EXPRESSING CONCERN TO 7S. OFFICIALS HERE OVER HEIGHTENED THREAT TO THAILAND RESULTING FROM RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN VIETNAM, CAMBODIA AND LAOS. WHILE THESE EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN ARE OFTEN PRESENTED IN JUSTIFICATION OF CONTINUING U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE, THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT THEY ARE ALSO BEING TRANSLATED INTO INCREASING THAI READINESS TO INVEST NATIONAL FUNDS IN MILITARY PROCUREMENT.

A. WE HAVE ALREADY REPORTED THE DECISION OF THE THAI CABINET ON JUNE 17 TO ACCEPT \$8 MILLION IN FY 75 FMS CREDIT. THIS REPRESENTS THAILAND'S ENTRY INTO THE FMS CREDIT AREA.

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B. AN ADDITIONAL \$26 MILLION IN FMS CASH PURCHASES ARE ON THE BRINK OF FIRM COMMITMENT. INCLUDED ARE \$10 MILLION IN SUPPLY SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS FOR AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS, \$7 MILLION FOR ARMY ORDINANCE ITEMS AND \$4.7 MILLION FOR NAVAL AMMUNITION AND SHIP SPARE PARTS.

C. GENERAL KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN, CHIEF OF STAFF, SUPREME COMMAND, RECENTLY TOLD COMUSMACHTAI HE HAS \$25 MILLION AVAILABLE FOR MILITARY PURCHASES THAT WILL INCLUDE 15,000 HT2A RADIOS, POSSIBLY AS MANY AS 60,000 M-16 RIFLES AND 170 105MM HOWITZERS.

D. THE ROYAL THAI NAVY HAS \$32 MILLION FROM OFF-SHORE OIL LEASES FOR THE PURCHASE OF THREE 165 FT. GUNBOATS. THE BIDDING, INCLUDING U.S. PARTICIPATION, HAS ALREADY BEEN CONCLUDED.

E. THE THAI HAVE REQUESTED PRICE AND AVAILABILITY DATA ON F5E AIRCRAFT TO THE TUNE OF ABOUT \$75 MILLION.

F. FROM RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH THAI MILITARY OFFICIALS, IT APPEARS THAT THE ARMED FORCES ARE ASKING FOR THE INCLUSION OF 800 MILLION BAHT (\$40 MILLION) IN THE NEXT BUDGET FOR MILITARY INVESTMENT ITEMS.

2. WHILE NOT ALL OF THESE INITIATIVES MAY EVENTUATE IN ACTUAL PURCHASES, THIS UPSURGE OF PROCUREMENT ACTIVITY SUGGESTS THAT THE THAI ARE INDEED SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THEIR ARMED FORCES, AND ACCEPT THE FACT THAT IT IS THEIR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE THE RESOURCES.
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